

# **General Plan Program City Council & Planning Commission Joint Study Session #3 Meeting Minutes, March 23, 2004**

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The Riverside City Council and Planning Commission convened in a joint meeting on March 23, 2004 at 3:00 P.M. on the 7th floor of City Hall, in the Mayor's Ceremonial conference room. Attendees were as follows:

## **City Council Members**

Mayor Ron Loveridge  
Dom Betro, Ward 1  
Ameal Moore, Ward 2  
Art Gage, Ward 3  
Ed Adkinson, Ward 5  
Nancy Hart, Ward 6  
Steve Adams, Ward 7

## **Planning Commission Members**

Chairperson David Agnew  
Finn Comer  
David Leonard  
Rita Norton

## **City Staff**

Ken Gutierrez, Planning Director  
Craig Aaron, Principal Planner  
Diane Jenkins, AICP, Senior Planner

## **Consultant Team**

Laura Stetson, Cotton/Bridges/Associates  
Gary Wayne, Cotton/Bridges/Associates

Planning Director Ken Gutierrez and the consultant team kicked off the meeting with a brief summary of the general plan process to date and the purpose of this meeting: to review proposed substantive changes to the Zoning Code and Subdivision Code, and to present the citywide Design Guidelines. Laura Stetson also stated that staff would like direction from the City Council on a few policy issues.

The Mayor opened the discussion by stating that this General Plan will be the most important planning document that the City has prepared.

Gary Wayne provided an overview of the proposed reorganization and updating of the Zoning Code. He indicated that the purpose of the effort was to create a modern, user-friendly code; to update use regulations and development standards; to streamline

administrative processes; and to incorporate smart growth principles. He showed how the new code makes extensive use of tables and graphics to convey information. As he reviewed the new zoning district structure, the Mayor indicated that he thought the City's direction was to eliminate the R-2 zone, as it encouraged undesirable rental properties. Councilman Gage concurred. David Leonard mentioned that R-2 works well with PRDs. Stetson asked whether the concern was with density or the attached units. Councilman Gage stated that the issue was ownership and that absentee ownership leads to "dumpy" properties. Councilman Adkinson said fourplexes raise similar concerns. Mayor Loveridge directed Planning staff to reconsider R-2 properties and bring back a recommendation.

Councilman Adkinson asked for further clarification on the new R-4 zone and how it differs from R-3-H. He wants to make sure that zoning accommodates more than 40 units per acre at some locations. Director Gutierrez stated that the mixed use zones and specific plans will allow higher densities.

Finn Comer asked that if industrial zones are combined, will all uses currently permitted be continued? Wayne stated that some undesirable uses will be eliminated and that most currently permitted would continue to be permitted. Mr. Comer also stated that he wants to ensure that Riverside can accommodate RV sales that generate tax revenue. Mr. Wayne stated that RV sales would be permitted conditionally in the General Commercial (CG) zones.

Councilman Adkinson directed Director Gutierrez to coordinate with Keith Downs of the County regarding the City's adoption of various airport-related zones. Adkinson also asked that Planning staff consider allowing variances for buildings higher than 25 feet in the RA-5 and RC zones. Director Gutierrez stated that Proposition R and Measure C prevent this from occurring. Commissioner Rita Norton opined that variances should be approved administratively rather than require Planning Commission hearings.

Leonard asked why the Commercial Storage overlay was proposed. Wayne and Gutierrez stated that this would limit development of mini-warehouses to select, appropriate locations.

Wayne then reviewed proposed changes to administrative procedures. He polled the Council regarding the proposal to have the Zoning Administrator approve all variances. The Council indicated that this was a good idea.

Adkinson suggested that the City not allow apartments on any site smaller than three acres. Director Gutierrez said staff would consider provisions for a minimum site size in the R-3 and R-4 zones.

Stetson then presented proposed changes to the Subdivision Code. She asked whether the proposal to allow parcel maps to be approved by the Zoning Administrator, rather than the Planning Commission, was okay. The Council and Commission indicated their approval of this proposal.

With regard to the proposal that the term "variance" used in the Subdivision Code be changed to "exception," the Mayor cautioned that the word exception might cause concern, particularly with regard to the RA-5 and RC zones. Staff indicated that an alternative term would be used.

With regard to the proposal to require landscaped parkways in all new subdivisions, Councilman Gage stated that the requirement was too stringent. Councilman Adkinson indicated that this could solve numerous problems which have occurred with property owners building within City right-of-way. Councilwoman Hart stated that she favors sidewalks in all development. Finn Comer stated that the City should encourage sidewalks. Councilman Adams agreed that sidewalks are appropriate even in rural areas. Staff indicated that they would look to create more flexibility in the regulations.

Following review of the Subdivision Code, Stetson gave a review of the proposed Citywide Design Guidelines. Councilwoman Hart asked whether the guidelines will address affordable housing. Stetson stated that all housing will be subject to the design guidelines.

The Council was presented with two policy questions for which Planning staff was seeking direction. First, staff asked whether tighter regulations should apply to “big box” development, including discretionary review and some form of “exit strategy.” Councilman Adkinson stated that simply a requirement for maintenance of vacant property should be sufficient. Comer stated that Riverside should focus on bringing business into the City, not discouraging it, and thus should not overly regulate big boxes.

The second question was if the Planning Commission ought to be the final approving authority for conditional use permits and planned developments, or does the City Council wish to retain that authority? The Council generally was not in favor of relinquishing review authority, citing the need to stay abreast of major development proposals.

Stetson closed the presentation with three ideas for future consideration: 1) requiring smart wiring in all new development, 2) establishing higher design standards for freeway-visible properties, and 3) prohibiting drive-through businesses in certain locations. The Council and Commission generally agreed that items 1 and 2 should be addressed as part of the current Zoning Code update and that item 3 should not be pursued.

Director Gutierrez thanked the Council and Commission and stated that the next opportunity for their review of the materials presented would be at public hearings in the fall. Councilmember Betro said that he would like more information on traffic issues and requested another workshop focused on circulation. Director Gutierrez mentioned that the consultant’s workshop budget was exhausted and that a scope/budget amendment would be required. Betro moved that the workshop be scheduled and additional funds allocated as needed; the motion was seconded and approved.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.